

## **Gulf of Mexico Red Grouper/Shallow-Water Grouper Commercial Fishery Closure Talking Points**

- Based on current quota monitoring statistics, NMFS has determined the available commercial quota of 5.31 million pounds (MP), gutted weight (GW) for red grouper will be reached on or before 12:01 a.m., local time, October 10, 2005. Measures contained in the final rule implementing grouper management (see below) close the entire shallow-water grouper commercial fishery when either the red grouper quota or the shallow-water grouper quota is reached. The fishery will remain closed until 12.01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2006.
- The Gulf shallow-water grouper complex is comprised of red, black, gag, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth, rock hind, and red hind groupers.
- The Gulf stock of red grouper was declared overfished and undergoing overfishing by NOAA Fisheries in October 2000.
- The red grouper rebuilding plan began in 2003. The rebuilding plan seeks to achieve a 9.4-percent reduction in the recreational and commercial harvest of red grouper, relative to the average landings for 1999-2001, during the first 3 years of the 10-year rebuilding plan.
- Measures in the final rule to accomplish this reduction equitably for the commercial and recreational sectors of the fishery included: 1) Establish a red grouper commercial quota of 5.31million pounds (MP), gutted weight (GW); 2) create the shallow-water grouper commercial quota of 8.80 MP, GW; and 3) close the entire shallow-water grouper commercial fishery when either the red grouper quota or the shallow-water grouper quota is reached. Size limits, commercial trip limits, various gear restrictions, and a commercial closure for gag, red grouper and black grouper from February 15 – March 15 each year are also used to regulate commercial harvest. A summary of commercial regulations can be found at: [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org).
- At the request of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and based on considerable industry input, NMFS published an emergency rule on February 17, 2005 establishing trip limits for the commercial shallow-water grouper and deep-water grouper (misty grouper, snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, warsaw grouper, and speckled hind) fisheries in Gulf EEZ. Beginning at 12:01 a.m., local time, March 3, 2005, a 10,000-pound trip limit for deep-water grouper and shallow-water grouper combined became effective; 2) if on or before August 1 more than 50 percent of either the shallow-water grouper quota (8.8 MP) or red grouper quota (5.31 MP) is reached, the trip limit will be reduced to 7,500 pounds; and 3) if on or before October 1 more than 75 percent of either the shallow-water grouper quota or red grouper quota is reached, the trip limit will be reduced further to 5,500 pounds.

- Based on quota monitoring reports, 50 per cent of the available quota of red grouper was reached on June 8, 2005. Therefore, the combined commercial trip limit for deep-water and shallow-water grouper was reduced to 7,500 pounds on June 9, 2005.
- Based on quota monitoring reports, 75 per cent of the available quota of red grouper was reached on August 3, 2005. Therefore, the commercial trip limit for shallow-water grouper was reduced to 5,500 pounds on August 4, 2005.
- The commercial fishery for deep-water grouper was closed on June 23, 2005 because statistics showed the quota for deep-water grouper (1.02 MP) was reached.
- An interim rule to reduce the overfishing of red grouper in the recreational fishery was effective August 9, 2005. This rule reduced the aggregate grouper bag limit to three grouper per person per day, reduced the bag limit of red grouper to one per person per day, and established a seasonal closure of the recreational fishery November 1 through December 31, 2005.